

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 19790

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: THE GAULLIST LOYAL OPPOSITION

SUMMARY. WITH THE RETURN OF THE MAJORITY TO POWER IN THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN MARCH, JACQUES CHIRAC AND THE RPR LEADERSHIP HAVE BEEN FACED WITH THREE PROBLEMS: (A) HOW TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF GAULLIST POLICIES IN THE FACE OF THOSE OF GISCARD AND BARRE WITH WHICH THEY DISAGREE WHILE APPEARING TO REMAIN LOYAL SUPPORTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT; (B) HOW TO MAINTAIN THEIR PARTY'S POLITICAL STRENGTH GIVEN A STRONG EFFORT BY GISCARD AND THE UDF TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR CONTROL OVER THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY AND PARA-STATAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND (C) HOW TO MAINTAIN CHIRAC AS A POTENTIAL CONTENDER FOR THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD EVENTS BRING GISCARD'S REELECTION INTO QUESTION. EVENTS THUS FAR HAVE SHOWN THAT THERE IS VERY LITTLE THAT THEY CAN DO OTHER THAN WATCH, WAIT AND MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS EMPHASIZING THEIR DIFFERENT APPROACH. END SUMMARY.

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1. SNIPING ON POLICIES: GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT'S CLEAR DOMINATION OF POLICY MAKING, THE GAULLIST LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN REDUCED TO SNIPING AT THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES WITH WHICH THEY DO NOT AGREE. IN CHIRAC'S PRESS CONFERENCE LAST WEEK, IN COUVE DE MURVILLE'S EARLIER SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND IN VARIOUS STATEMENTS BY GAUL-

LIST LEADERS, THE RPR LEADERSHIP HAS TAKEN EACH OPPORTUNITY TO EMPHASIZE ITS SEPARATE IDENTITY. IN CRITICIZING BARRE'S ECONOMIC POLICY (NOT ENOUGH EMPHASIS ON INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION AND COMBATING UNEMPLOYMENT), THE GAULLISTS ASSERT THEIR INTENT TO WORK FOR POLICIES FOR WHICH "THEY" WERE ELECTED, AND TO CLEARLY INDICATE THE ALTERNATIVE POLICIES THEY WOULD IMPLEMENT IF THEY WERE IN A POSITION TO DO SO. PRIME MINISTER BARRE HOWEVER CONTINUES HIS ECONOMIC PROGRAM CLAIMING WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION THAT THE MAJORITY'S RETURN TO POWER REFLECTS THE ELECTORATE'S FAITH IN HIS POLICIES AS MUCH AS IT DOES CHIRAC'S HIGH POWERED CAMPAIGNING. ONE OF THE FEW SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATIVE ISSUES TO ARISE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THIS SPRING CONCERNED THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX -- AN ISSUE WHICH ALMOST BROUGHT DOWN THE GOVERNMENT TWO YEARS AGO AS A RESULT OF GAULLIST OPPOSITION. THIS TIME, IT WAS PASSED (AFTER SOME COMPROMISES) WITH ONLY A HANDFUL OF GAULLISTS DISSENTING. WHILE THE GAULLISTS CAN CLAIM A VICTORY OF SORTS IN THE COMPROMISES OBTAINED, THE LIMITATIONS OF THEIR OPPOSITION WERE CLEARLY UNDERLINED. THE RELATIVE EASE WITH WHICH THE BILL PASSED ALSO REFLECTED GISCARD'S INCREASING SOPHISTICATION IN DEALING WITH THE ASSEMBLY. THE GOVERNMENT ON THIS SUBJECT, AS WELL AS OTHERS, HAS GONE TO SOME LENGTHS TO CONSULT WITH GAULLIST DEPUTIES AND PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING PROPOSALS FOR LEGIS-

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LATION IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID POSSIBLE GROUNDS FOR CONFRONTATION.

2. CRITICIZING FOREIGN POLICY: GISCARD'S AFRICAN POLICY, PARTICULARLY IN ZAIRE AND CHAD, HAS ALSO COME UNDER GAULLIST ATTACK. FIRST BECAUSE SOME GAULLISTS ARE GENUINELY CONCERNED ABOUT GISCARD'S TENDENCY TO INTERVENE IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS WITHOUT, IN THEIR OPINION, A GOOD LEGAL CASE, AND SECONDLY, BECAUSE OF WHAT WAS STATED AS THE POTENTIAL DANGER TO FRANCE'S IMAGE IN THE (THIRD) WORLD. EQUALLY IMPORTANT HOWEVER WAS CHIRAC'S DECISION TO BUILD UP HIS IMAGE AS A STATESMAN KNOWLEDGEABLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS. GAULLIST CRITICISM OF GISCARD'S DISARMAMENT POLICY, PARTICIPATION IN UNIFIL, POLICY IN WESTERN SAHARA, ETC., REFLECT MORE THEIR CONCERN TO HAVE A BASIS FOR DISASSOCIATING THEMSELVES FROM GISCARD (SHOULD EVENTS JUSTIFY IT) THAN A GENUINE ATTEMPT TO ALTER PRESENT POLICY. THE CRITICISM ON ZAIRE WAS SHORT-LIVED BECAUSE OF THAT ACTION'S ESSENTIALLY HUMANITARIAN COLORATION. THE GOF'S ROLE IN CHAD IS MORE VULNERABLE, HOWEVER, AND IF LEFT UNRESOLVED COULD BECOME A HOT ISSUE.

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3. EUROPE AND THE EEC: THE GAULLISTS REMAIN CRITICAL OF GISCARD'S BASICALLY PRO-EUROPEAN, ATLANTICIST POLITICS, BUT ARE DIVIDED INTERNALLY BETWEEN MICHEL DEBRE'S HARD-LINE NATIONALIST APPROACH AND THE NEED PERCEIVED BY THE OTHER LEADERS TO TAKE A SOFTER POSITION IN ORDER TO MAKE A STRONG SHOWING IN THE EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. FOR THE MOMENT, THE RPR'S POSITION REMAINS RATHER AMBIGUOUS. DEBRE IS NOW ON THE HUSTINGS, MAKING SPEECHES WARNING ABOUT THE EEC'S SUPRANATIONAL ROLE AND THE DANGERS OF ATLANTICISM. THE RESPONSE HE ELICITS (IF ANY) WILL BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE RPR'S FINAL POSITIONS.

4. THE UDF STATE: THE FORMATION OF THE NEW MINISTERIAL CABINETS AND PERSONNEL CHANGES AT THE HEAD OF KEY PARA-STATAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE EVIDENCED A REMARKABLE LACK OF INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFIED WITH CHIRAC. THE RPR
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LEADERSHIP HAS ACCUSED GISCARD OF BUILDING A GISCARDIAN STATE (L'ETAT UDF), SYSTEMATICALLY REMOVING GAULLIST LEADERS FROM POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE. THE GISCARDIANS DENY THIS CRITICISM NOTING THAT MANY OF THE APPOINTEES ARE GAULLISTS. THE UNSTATED COROLLARY IS THAT THE GAULLISTS APPOINTED ARE NOT KNOWN FOR THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH JACQUES CHIRAC. THIS TACTIC NOT ONLY SERVES TO STRENGTHEN GISCARD; IT IS ALSO DIFFICULT FOR CHIRAC TO COMBAT, SINCE EMPHASIZING IT WOULD POINT UP HIS WEAKNESS AS THE HEAD OF A MAJOR PARTY.

5. PARIS VERSUS THE GOF: THE BATTLE BETWEEN CHIRAC AND GISCARD HAS BEEN MOST CLEARLY ACCENTUATED IN THE QUESTION OF THE GOF'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PARIS BUDGET. AS LONG AS PARIS WAS UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE GOF, IT RETAINED A SPECIAL STATUS WITH REGARD TO THE FINANCING OF CITY SERVICES. NOW THE GOF IS INSISTING THAT AS PARIS NO LONGER HOLDS THAT SPECIAL STATUS AND NOW HAS AN INDEPENDENT CITY GOVERNMENT, IT MUST FULFILL THE SAME FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS FOR SELF-FINANCING OF SERVICES AS REQUIRED OF OTHER CITIES. CHIRAC MAINTAINS THAT GIVEN PARIS' SPECIAL PROBLEMS, THIS IS UNFAIR AND HAS INCREASED TAXES BY 7 PERCENT TO MEET THE HIGHER BUDGETARY COSTS -- BLAMING THE TAX INCREASES ON THE GOF -- I.E., GISCARD AND BARRE. CHIRAC HAS ALSO INDICATED THAT HE WILL TAKE THE QUESTION TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO FORCE A CHANGE IN THE GOF'S POSITION. WHILE VARIOUS COMPROMISES ARE AVAILABLE TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION IN THE ASSEMBLY, BOTH CHIRAC AND THE GOF SEE SOME POTENTIAL POLITICAL ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM THE CONFLICT -- CHIRAC BY DEFENDING PARIS AND, BY ASSOCIATION, OTHER LARGE CITIES CONCERNING THEIR FINANCIAL NEEDS; AND THE GOF BY IMPOSING SOLUTIONS ON CHIRAC WHICH

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REDUCE HIS MARGIN FOR MANEUVER AND WHICH INCREASINGLY BRING HIS CITY GOVERNMENT UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF THE GOF.

6. GISCARD'S PRESS CONFERENCE: THE RPR'S RESPONSE TO GISCARD'S RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE WAS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE LIMITS TO WHICH RPR LEADERSHIP FEELS IT CAN GO IN PLAYING THE MAVERICK. GISCARD'S TWO-HOUR PRESENTATION WAS NOTABLE NOT ONLY FOR THE PROPOSALS FOR REFORM HE SUGGESTED BUT ALSO FOR ITS CAREFUL TAILORING TO ELICIT THE BROADEST POSSIBLE MAJORITY SUPPORT (OMISSION OF ANY REFERENCE TO NATO, PROPORTIONAL ELECTIONS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND OTHER PET GAULLIST COM-

PLAINTS). AS A RESULT, EVEN THOUGH GISCARD SPOKE FOR OVER TWO HOURS ON A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES, CHIRAC REMAINED MUTE AND THE RPR'S RESPONSE WAS LIMITED TO MURMURS OF APPROVAL FROM ITS YOUNG SECRETARY GENERAL.

7. TRENCH WARFARE: AS ONE POLITICIAN NOTED TO EMBOFF, THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE RPR AND THE UDF, CHIRAC AND GISCARD, REFLECTS A TYPE OF PROTRACTED TRENCH WARFARE. IN SPITE OF A GREAT AMOUNT OF NOISE AND SMOKE FROM TIME TO TIME, THERE WILL BE VERY LITTLE, OR ONLY GRADUAL CHANGES IN THE ACTUAL POSITIONS OF THE TWO SIDES. SECOND, BOTH SIDES HAVE WELL DEFINED BASES OF STRENGTH, WHICH THE OTHER CAN DO VERY LITTLE TO ALTER. THE RPR IS THE LARGEST PARTY IN THE MAJORITY IN TERMS OF VOTERS AND IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. GISCARD AND THE UDF CONTROL THE LEVERS OF POWER IN THE GOVERNMENT. AND THEY BOTH NEED EACH OTHER.

8. STRATEGY OF A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE: JUST AS THE UDF BASED ITS ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN ON ITS VIABILITY AS A GISCARDIAN ALTERNATIVE TO THE GAULLISTS WITHIN THE MAJORITY,

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THE GAULLISTS AND PARTICULARLY CHIRAC ARE NOW ESTABLISH-

ING THEMSELVES AS THE ALTERNATIVE TO GISCARD AND THE UDF. THEY CONTINUE TO CRITICIZE AND PUT FORTH THEIR ALTERNATIVES WHILE SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT. IF,AS SOME RPR STRATEGISTS PREDICT, THE GOF WILL ENCOUNTER TROUBLE NEXT FALL AND IN 1979 DUE TO ITS ECONOMIC POLICY (INCREASING LABOR UNREST, UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION), CHIRAC AND THE RPR PLAN TO BE IN A POSITION TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION -- WITH A SPECIAL EYE TOWARD THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN 1981.

9. COMMENT: THE PUBLICIZED DIFFERENCES IN OPINION BETWEEN THE RPR AND THE GISCARDIAN PART OF THE GOF ARE ONLY THE OVERT MANIFESTATIONS OF A PROTRACTED POLITICAL STRUGGLE WHICH STARTED OVER TWO YEARS AGO AND WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE LONG INTO THE FUTURE. THE NEXT NATIONAL DOMESTIC ELECTION WILL BE FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1981, AND THE GISCARDIANS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN THEIR EFFORTS TO

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CONSOLIDATE THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION. CHIRAC'S OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING HIS INDEPENDENT POSITION WILL BE BOTH LIMITED AND POLITICALLY DANGEROUS. AS GISCARD REPORTEDLY REACTED TO CRITICISMS CHIRAC EXPRESSED IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, CHIRAC HAS ONLY BEGUN HIS PASSAGE THROUGH THE WILDERNESS AND HE IS GOING TO NEED THOSE SHARP TEETH.
HARTMAN

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